

THE GLOUCESTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Our mission is for all students to be successful, engaged, lifelong learners.

School Committee Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, October 10, 2012

City Hall – Kyrouz Auditorium

7:00 p.m.

Members Present

Jonathan Pope, Chairman
Val Gilman, Assistant Chairperson
Kathy Clancy, Secretary
Melissa Teixeira
Roger Garberg
Tony Gross
Mayor Carolyn Kirk

Administration Present

Dr. Richard Safier, Superintendent
Gregg Bach, Assistant Superintendent
Hans Baumhauer, Dir. of Finance and Operations
Erik Anderson, GHS Principal

Recorded by Cape Ann TV

- I. **CALL TO ORDER** – Chairman Pope called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. and welcomed the Cape Ann TV audience.
- II. **SALUTE TO THE FLAG** – After the salute, Chairman Pope stated the mission of the Gloucester Public Schools.
- III. **ORAL COMMUNICATIONS** – None
- IV. **COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIRPERSON** – Chairman Pope noted that “Recognitions” inadvertently got left off tonight’s agenda.
- V. **RECOGNITIONS** – Mrs. Gilman recognized O’Maley student Talia DeWolfe, who organized a walk for breast cancer this month and raised \$5,000.

Dr. Safier introduced Linda Gipstein, a nurse practitioner at the GHS Student Based Health Center, who spoke about the health fair held at the high school last week. She circulated a brochure about the health center that was sent out at the beginning of the school year. She reported that Tina Ketchopoulos organized the health fair and that there were approximately 20 vendors set up in the field house so that students could see the services that are available to them in the community.

- VI. **STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL** – Erin Jermyn and Melody Eaton introduced themselves and updated the School Committee on the following events at Gloucester High School: Spirit Week and pep rally, annual lobster roll, food drive, and sports teams. Melody reported that the Student Council officers met with Mr. Anderson to discuss the attendance policy and that the Student Council supports it. However, she noted that they raised a concern about previously planned family vacations that may have some academic value. She also reported that the parking situation near Newell Stadium has improved now that lines have been painted on the pavement.

VII. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Approval of Minutes

1. Ad Hoc City Charter Subcommittee of September 18, 2012
2. Building & Finance Subcommittee of September 19, 2012
3. School Committee Governance Workshop of September 20, 2012
4. Ad Hoc Policy Manual Subcommittee of September 24, 2012
5. School Committee of September 26, 2012
6. Special Program Subcommittee of October 3, 2012

B. Approval of Out-of-State GHS Field Trip – To approve an out-of-state GHS field trip to attend two pre-season scrimmages against Essex Junction High School in Burlington, Vermont on December 7 and 8, 2012.

C. Acceptance of Gift – To accept \$300.00 from the Fish Box Derby to the GHS Junior ROTC Program.

On a motion by Mrs. Gilman, seconded by Kathy Clancy, it was unanimously

VOTED: 7 in favor zero opposed, to approve the Consent Agenda.

VIII. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT/DELIBERATIONS ON EDUCATIONAL ISSUES

A. Superintendent's Report – Dr. Safier updated the committee on the following matters:

1. Enrollment as of October 1, 2012 – Dr. Safier noted a difference of 104 students this year as compared to last year, 56 of which relate to changes in enrollment at the high school and approximately 38 at the elementary schools.
2. Charter School and Enrollment Projection – Dr. Safier thanked Kathy Clancy for her assistance in drafting the letter to Senator Tarr and Representative Ferrante.
3. John and Abigail Adams Scholarship – Dr. Safier reviewed the definition of a Level 1 school.
4. Safe Routes to School
5. Grade 4 Annual Comparisons – MCAS – Dr. Safier feels very strongly that consultants should be brought in to help us audit our math program and instruction.
6. NEMLEC/STARS Program – Dr. Safier indicated that he has had some preliminary conversations with the DPW about assessing the lock situation at GHS to ensure that every door that needs to be locked for emergency situations is locked and that there is a master key for administration and custodial staff. He has also asked the DPW for an estimate for providing locks for all of the other schools.

7. Leadership Team – Dr. Safier reported that school publicists will be submitting a chart electronically indicating the publicity they have sent out to the media. The principals will also sign off at the end of each month indicating that the web site has been updated. Dr. Safier also indicated that the physical restraint and timeout room protocols have been shared with administrative staff.

Mr. Bach updated the committee on the new evaluation system. He reported that a consultant from Teachers 21 will provide training to administrators on November 15th and December 6th. This training will focus on some of the elements of the evaluation system after the teachers have submitted their plans and administrators are being asked to do observations and collect artifacts of evidence.

8. EEE/WNV Activities Rescheduling Update
9. O'Maley Innovation Middle School – Dr. Safier noted that there is a tremendous amount of enthusiasm at the middle school and that the Teachers Advisory Council is now becoming active. To date, there has been no request for any faculty member of the Teachers Advisory Council to be involved in Leadership Team meetings. Mrs. Gilman added that there were lengthy conversations by administration to parents/guardians on back-to-school night about what the innovation school meant.

On a motion by Ms. Teixeira, seconded by Mrs. Gilman, it was unanimously

VOTED: 7 in favor zero opposed, to accept the Superintendent's Report of October 10, 2012.

- B. New State Discipline Law** – Dr. Safier reviewed the August 2012 Education Alert regarding new state legislation that affects student suspensions and expulsions, which becomes effective on July 1, 2014 and addresses what happens if students are excluded from school. He stated that schools and districts, hopefully with some assistance from the state, must find ways of ensuring that students who are excluded from school, particularly for an extended period of time, are offered appropriate educational services (i.e. tutoring, alternative placement, Saturday school, online classes, and distance learning).

IX. SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

- A. Ad Hoc City Charter Subcommittee Meeting of September 18, 2012** – Chairman Gross reported that the subcommittee reviewed the School Committee Rules of Procedure at its meeting on September 18, 2012. Unfortunately, he was not able to get the revisions to Ms. Delisi in time for tonight's meeting. Therefore, this matter was tabled. Mr. Gross apologized for not getting the revisions to the committee in a timely manner.
- B. Ad Hoc Policy Manual Subcommittee Meeting of September 24, 2012** – Chairperson Teixeira reported that the subcommittee discussed Sections G and H of the policy manual

at its meeting on September 24, 2012. She stated that once the review of the manual is completed, School Committee members will be given electronic and paper copies of all of the policies, and the committee will have 60 days to review the policy manual and make any necessary changes.

The subcommittee will be discussing Section I at the next meeting, which was tentatively scheduled for November 19, 2012. Ms. Teixeira noted that she now has a conflict with that date and that it may be rescheduled to a later date. She reached out to Mr. Garberg, who has not yet had the opportunity to participate on this subcommittee, to attend the next meeting, as well as Kathy Clancy or Mrs. Gilman, since it pertains to policy issues.

Mrs. Gilman asked if there would be any benefit to splitting the policy manual in half and approving the first half. Ms. Teixeira noted that the ad hoc subcommittee would have to stop meeting for awhile in order for Mike Gilbert to catch up on the first half of the manual and indicated that she would ask him about this.

- C. Special Program Subcommittee Meeting of October 3, 2012** – Chairperson Gilman reported that the Program Subcommittee reviewed the FAQs and made quite a few additional changes at its meeting on October 3, 2012.

On a motion by Mrs. Gilman, seconded by Ms. Teixeira, it was unanimously

VOTED: 7 in favor zero opposed, to approve the updated Frequently Asked Questions for the West Parish MSBA Building Project, as amended on October 3, 2012.

Mrs. Gilman requested that the committee allow any factual changes to the FAQs going forward to be made without a full committee vote since there will be many changes during the next year. Ms. Teixeira stated that she agrees so long as there is someone overseeing the changes in the event there is an issue. Mr. Garberg believes that that oversight would come from the Program Subcommittee, and Dr. Safier stated that it will be a prominent role of the OPM to communicate with the public about the project and to fact-check what is being posted on the website. Chairman Pope indicated that when the OPM is hired, the School Committee should have a discussion with them about how they recommend we proceed and how they can support our efforts.

Mr. Garberg indicated that there are a couple of minor changes to the interpretation of the items in the revised version of the Fuller School survey report that was circulated earlier today and requested permission from the committee to update that report on the website. He explained that the original report suggested that larger schools were seen as being preferred for teacher resources. However, upon looking at the data more closely, it is clear that the community is essentially split on that question.

After discussion, on a motion by Mr. Garberg, seconded by Ms. Teixeira, it was unanimously

VOTED: 7 in favor zero opposed, to update the report on the Fuller School survey as described.

- D. Program Subcommittee Meeting of October 3, 2012** – Chairperson Gilman reported that the Program Subcommittee discussed the GPSD website and the GHS attendance policy at its meeting on October 3, 2012.

With respect to the GHS attendance policy, Mr. Anderson stated that it was proposed to increase the level of rigor, establish more solid relationships amongst all stakeholders in the building, and create a higher performing school culture and that the humanistic intent of the policy is a student reengagement initiative and a dropout prevention initiative. He wants every student to be successful and stated that the administration needs to exercise due diligence and involve parents and families at levels that are spelled out in the policy. The intent is to help prepare our young people for 21st century success skills that apply to all walks of life (i.e. being trustworthy, diligent and dependable) and to make them contributing members to the community.

Mr. Anderson stated that chronic absenteeism and/or truancy relates to delinquency, and that is something he intends to prevent through the proposed policy. He wants our students to be in school as often as they possibly can so that they can be engaged in meaningful instruction as often as possible, which requires the establishment of a high expectation for attendance and the school accountability piece that goes along with it. The intent is to not let truancy or chronic absenteeism happen in the first place.

Mr. Anderson indicated that the administration will be proactive regarding state laws that require parents/guardians to have their kids in school and that, at the high school level, it is appropriate that the students own a piece of this, especially ages 16 and older. This process includes phone calls and letters asking why the students are not in school. Meetings will be scheduled with parents/guardians and students to find out what is going on and what can be done to rectify the situation. He noted that often, when parents/guardians are involved, there is a solution that may not have been as readily apparent previously. He stated that all of these accountability steps must be documented; otherwise, the policy cannot be administered. This will result in a higher level of communication with students who are the most challenged and the most at-risk.

Mr. Anderson indicated that, to the extent that we have the capability to do so, this policy will provide outreach and assistance for needy families. He noted that Gloucester High's attendance is the most significant contributor to the district's having an attendance rate that is, on average, 4 points lower than the state average. In the outreach and offering of assistance, the high school administration team has been discussing credit recovery and targeted remedial programs for students who are failing in general to help them stay on track towards graduation.

Mayor Kirk asked what kind of analysis Mr. Anderson has done regarding the cause of dropouts and what other measures are being put in place to prevent that. She also does not understand how failing children in their classes prevents chronic absenteeism. She believes that much of the policy is punitive in nature and questioned how we can include more motivation that is positive. Lastly, she stated that, to her, the policy is wholly incomplete until the credit recovery program piece is in place.

Mr. Anderson stated that 20 percent of GHS students account for 70 percent of the absences and that they are the target audience of the policy. Of that 20 percent, this policy will make a difference in terms of the level of attendance and attitude towards being in school more often for 17 percent of them. He noted that Gloucester does not have a high dropout rate because there are interventions in place to help prevent dropouts. A credit recovery program and other things would need to be implemented that would increase the level of student engagement and motivation. In his experience, implementation of this policy is how we can move furthest fastest in terms of attacking the issue of chronic absenteeism.

Mrs. Gilman recommended that the first reading of the policy be tabled until the next meeting in light of the fact that the Program Subcommittee minutes have not yet been prepared. She also suggested that the first reading of the policy should not be waived. Mr. Garberg agreed that reviewing the subcommittee minutes may make members feel easier about the discussion that gave rise to this but expressed concern about delaying the discussion for too long.

Ms. Teixeira thanked Mrs. Gilman for the opportunity to attend the Program Subcommittee meeting and thanked Mr. Anderson for the work that he has done with respect to the policy. She understands the intent of the policy but stated that she shares Mayor Kirk's concerns about the punitive nature of the policy and the consequences of an Attendance Failure. She was hoping those concerns would be addressed tonight. She noted that the CHINS law is changing so that it is not as punitive and that the message is very strong from the legislature that children need to be educated and not punished. She would like to know why the language in the attendance policy is so punitive and what the recovery will be for an A-student that misses 10 or 12 days of school and has an "AF" on their transcript. Mr. Anderson stated that he does not recall in his experience the Attendance Failure ever being implemented for A-students and that where it has been effective is with more borderline students (i.e. D-students) who miss, say, 2 days a week.

In terms of timing, Kathy Clancy would like to ensure that the committee thoughtfully discusses and hopefully moves the policy forward for implementation at the beginning of the second term. Mr. Anderson reported that attendance is much higher now with students just thinking about the possibility of the policy being implemented.

Mayor Kirk agreed that the first reading of the policy should be tabled but believes that tonight's discussion should not be truncated in any way. She stated that the policy will have consequences to families that are unintended and that we cannot anticipate today. Therefore, she believes it is important to discuss the policy tonight while the principal and superintendent are present. She noted that there is nothing preventing the principal from implementing certain aspects of the policy that are already in place. The piece that she believes needs work is where the notification letter is sent home, the connection with the family is not made, time has gone on, and the teacher has no choice but to give the student an "AF." She questioned whether there could be a different trigger point that prevents an "AF" if outreach has not taken place before the grade gets recorded. Mr. Anderson noted that the teacher is not involved in recording an "AF," and Mayor Kirk suggested that some of the detail of how that works needs to be spelled out in the policy.

Dr. Safier stated that he would prefer to use the word “consequences” as opposed to characterizing the policy as punitive. He stated that the inclusion of contact with families, administrative and social outreach, and a credit recovery option is part of the overall balance that needs to take place. If children are not going to school, what are the consequences? If one student is going to school and playing by the rules and somebody else is not attending, at what point is there a distinction made between the expectations of all students in the district? He recognizes that the notion of an Attendance Failure is dramatic, but it is not irreparable. It indicates the importance of being in class and the consequences for not being in class.

Mr. Gross noted that if someone does not show up for a job they get fired, and the high school is trying to teach those lessons, also. However, second chances are important, and he suggested including the ability to have an “AF” expunged by a consistently good attendance record. Mayor Kirk reiterated that the policy must be clear to students and families, and Ms. Teixeira stated that spelling out in the policy the opportunity to recover from an “AF” would make her feel more comfortable with the policy.

Mrs. Gilman suggested that the Program Subcommittee reconvene sometime next week to look at alternatives and revise the policy to include more detail. Dr. Safier stated that he would like to give the high school an opportunity to reflect on it and then bring it back to the subcommittee.

Mr. Garberg noted that we are not talking about punishment; we are talking about feedback. The grade is a message to students and families about the connection between their efforts in class and what happens in school and in life. He would be willing to convene again in subcommittee to discuss how we might spell that out more clearly and make it clear that the policy is an effort to establish communications with students that may not appreciate the link between their efforts and outcomes.

Kathy Clancy agrees with the need for this policy because students are not learning if they are not in class. She noted that there are many experiences in life that require someone to be present when they are expected to be somewhere, and many college classes include attendance as part of a student’s grade.

Chairman Pope believes that it is very important that we have a strong attendance policy. Ultimately, what makes for a successful student is their ability to follow the rules, regulate themselves, and be successful in the community.

In terms of actual numbers, Mr. Bach reported that last year, 136 students (more than 10 percent of the population of the high school) were responsible for 4,300 days absent and 5,300 tardy instances. Some examples with respect to particular students: 42 absent/43 tardy, 62 absent/88 tardy, 47 absent/28 tardy, 62 absent/83 tardy, 73 absent/46 tardy.

This policy was referred back to the Program Subcommittee for further discussion.

X. ACTION

- A. First Reading of Gloucester High School Attendance Policy** – Tabled. See IX.D.
- B. Second Reading of Social Networking Policy, File IJNDD** – Chairman Pope stated that there was one change to the first reading of the policy to include photographs, and Dr. Safier reviewed where that reference was placed in the policy.

On a motion by Ms. Teixeira, seconded by Mr. Gross, it was unanimously

VOTED: 7 in favor zero opposed, to waive the second reading of the Social Networking Policy, File IJNDD.

After discussion, on a motion by Ms. Teixeira, seconded by Kathy Clancy, it was unanimously

VOTED: 7 in favor zero opposed, to adopt the Social Networking Policy, File IJNDD, as presented.

- C. School Committee Rules of Procedure 2012** – Tabled. See IX.A.
- D. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for West Parish School MSBA Building Project** – See IX.C.

XI. DISCUSSION/OTHER COMMUNICATION/NEW BUSINESS

- A. MSBA Update** – Dr. Safier reported that the OPM Selection Committee has reviewed portfolios submitted by a number of firms and has narrowed the field down to four companies. Applicants will be interviewed on October 11th and 12th, and the recommendation for the lead applicant will be made to the MSBA by October 19th.
- B. Mayor Kirk’s Letter dated September 21, 2012 to School Committee Chairperson Pope**
- C. Schedule of Upcoming Meetings** – Chairman Pope indicated that he and City Council President Jackie Hardy will work together on an agenda for the Joint City Council/School Committee meeting. He welcomed suggestions of matters that should be discussed with the City Council at that meeting.
- D. School Committee Operating Protocols**
- E. City Council Certificate of Vote Number 2012-196** – This vote concerns declaring the piece of property that is part of the Newell Stadium parcel surplus.
- F. Evaluation Guide for Superintendents 2012** – Dr. Safier requested that this matter be referred to the Personnel Subcommittee.

- G. Resolutions** – Mrs. Gilman requested that the next agenda include the topic of the five resolutions that will be adopted, approved or amended at the upcoming MASC meeting. She reviewed the resolutions and stated that they are very meaningful to the committee. She asked each of the members to review the resolutions and determine which ones they would like to support as a committee. She noted that the committee also needs to appoint a member to vote on the resolutions at the MASC meeting.

Kathy Clancy suggested determining which of the resolutions the members feel strongly about supporting, noting that they may not care to take a position on some of them. Mrs. Gilman requested that the superintendent look at the resolutions to determine which of them he feels should be prioritized. Dr. Safier reported that he spoke with Senator Tarr, who referred him to Mike Smith, who can also provide updates on legislative information. Finally, Ms. Teixeira recommended that members research other materials in addition to what MASC has provided regarding the resolutions.

- H. Equal Distribution of High Needs Students** – Chairman Pope noted that when the Plan for Effective Learning Communities (PFELC) was done, one of the criteria was to look for equal distribution of “High Needs” students, which refers to low income, ELL and former ELL students and students with disabilities. He noted that at Veterans School, they do not have enough students who are not “High Needs” in grade 4 and requested that the School Committee think about how this matter may be addressed. Mayor Kirk believes that another metric that was used in the PFELC was no more than 30 percent of “High Needs” students at any given school. She requested a baseline of where we are today with respect to the percentage of “High Needs” students at each school.

XII. EXECUTIVE SESSION – None

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Ms. Teixeira, seconded by Kathy Clancy, it was unanimously

VOTED: 7 in favor zero opposed, to adjourn the School Committee Meeting of October 10, 2012 at 9:15 p.m.

All reference documents and reports are filed in the Superintendent’s office.

*Maria Puglisi
Recording Secretary*